

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Washington state law and policy encourage a multi-jurisdictional, multi-stakeholder process at the watershed level to develop science-based actions to protect and restore salmon habitat. In addition, recognition is growing that working to conserve salmon is good not just for the fish, but also for the livelihood, health, and quality of life of people as well.

In the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed, 27 local jurisdictions, consisting of King and Snohomish counties and 25 cities in those counties, signed an interlocal agreement to fund a joint planning effort to conserve salmon habitat in their shared watershed. This collaborative process, as well as active participation by business and environmental groups, scientists, state agencies, and concerned citizens, has resulted in the *Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed (WRIA 8) Near-Term Action Agenda for Salmon Habitat Conservation*. The Action Agenda offers interim guidance to stem the decline of salmon habitat while local governments, other interested partners, scientists, and the public continue to work together on a longer-term plan for conservation of salmon habitat.

A long-term view is necessary because although scientific knowledge is increasing about both the needs of salmon and how to aid in its conservation and recovery, this knowledge is nowhere near complete. This means more scientific study and understanding are required before a long-term salmon conservation plan can be prepared. In the meantime, the Action Agenda has been created to help jurisdictions, interested organizations, and concerned citizens make informed decisions about what immediate actions to take.

It should be noted that the Action Agenda is neither mandatory law nor a full salmon recovery plan. The other causes for declining populations, such as hatchery management and harvest, must be addressed in other venues. The Action Agenda is intended to provide projects and guidance that can be undertaken to improve habitat conditions for salmon in the immediate future. There are four categories of recommendations: habitat protection and restoration projects; regulatory and policy guidance; public education, incentives, and involvement; and guidance for research, monitoring, and adaptive management. The purpose of the Action Agenda is to propose a range of activities within these four categories that can be undertaken quickly, usually within 2 to 5 years, and that do not require detailed analysis and planning.

The strategy of the Action Agenda is based on and addresses the natural and human-caused factors contributing to the loss of chinook salmon habitat, referred to in the Action Agenda as factors of decline. This near-term strategy relies on a broad set of ecosystem objectives and a specific set of guiding principles that together characterize the types of actions needed for the unique circumstances in the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed. The near-term strategy pinpoints habitat subareas of the watershed most critical to chinook spawning, rearing, and migration. It also explains how the four categories of actions offer opportunities to address salmon habitat decline both in the key habitat subareas and around the watershed at large.

The Action Agenda provides general guidance and criteria on proposing and implementing appropriate actions as well as a menu of recommendations that can be undertaken in the next 5

years. Included are 182 habitat protection, restoration, and research projects, 25 regulatory and policy guidance suggestions, and 44 public outreach action recommendations. In addition, the Action Agenda offers guidance to help implementers incorporate a monitoring and adaptive management component into their projects and programs. This is a critical tool for gathering information needed to develop the long-term plan. To help ensure success, the Action Agenda also includes a directory of implementation resources, such as model ordinances, relevant publications and websites, and a table of funding sources.

The Action Agenda is not expected to be the final word on salmon conservation. Rather, it starts the dialogue by laying out numerous opportunities for local jurisdictions, interested organizations, and concerned citizens to take actions to conserve habitat in the watershed that humans share with salmon.